

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the specification as follows:

On pages 6 and 7, please replace paragraph no. 0021 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0021] As can be seen in Fig. 1B, a lower plurality of buoy guides 36 (in this example, four guides, but three or more can be used, depending on the load to be absorbed by the guides) extends into the lower moon pool 14 from the base 12. Preferably, these guides are compliant. The lower buoy guides 36 significantly reduce the gap between the buoy 26 and the base 12 within the lower moon pool 14 for further reducing the impact loads. A similar upper plurality of compliant buoy guides 36 (not shown) extends into the upper moon pool 22 from the production deck 18 to reduce the gap between the buoy 26 and the production deck 18. As described more fully below, each of the buoy guides 36 comprises a steel projection coated with Teflon or polypropylene. Preferably, the buoy guides 36 are configured and located to be in constant, uninterrupted contact with the buoy 26. In order to do so, the buoy guides 36 must be compliant enough to allow the installation of the central columnar buoy 26, and also to allow the relative vertical motions between the buoy 26 and the floating platform, while also accommodating any buoy diameter variances from its nominal diameter due to manufacturing tolerances. The guides 36 may include, at their free ends, a wear pad mounted on a compliant support (an elastomeric block or a leaf spring), as disclosed and claimed in commonly-assigned[[,]] ~~co-pending US application no. 09/850,599 US Pat. 6,679,331~~, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. As described in more detail below, to further reduce the friction between the buoy 26 and the guides 36, a wheel allowing vertical movement of the buoy 26 may also be mounted on a compliant support.

On pages 7 and 8, please replace paragraph no. 0023 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0023] Figures 2A to 2C show different examples of compliant buoy guides 36. Figure 2A

shows a standard compliant guide 36 comprising a wear pad 38 (preferably made of a suitable steel) with a contact surface formed by a coating or layer of PTFE or polypropylene. The wear pad 38 is supported on the free end of a steel projection 40, the other end of which is fixed to the base 12 or the production deck 18. In between the steel projection 40 and the wear pad 38, a compliant element 42 is arranged to allow the guide 36 to absorb impact loads and to accommodate buoy diameter variances. The compliant element 42 preferably comprises one or more elastomeric blocks, as shown in Figures 2A and 2B; alternatively it may comprise one or more leaf springs (not shown). The stiffness of the compliant element is selected, depending on the environmental conditions, and it may comprise either a single stiffness compliant system (one grade of elastomer or a constant stiffness leaf spring) or a multi-stiffness compliant system in order to provide the guide with an non-linear stiffness to absorb loads of different magnitudes (several grades of elastomer, or leaf springs of several different stiffnesses) as suggested in US patent application ~~09/850,599~~ 6,679,331.

On page 8, please replace paragraph no. 0024 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0024] Figure 2B shows an alternative guide 36', in which the wear pad is replaced by a wheel and rail assembly. A wheel or roller 44 is rotatably mounted in a pair of journals 46 (only one of which is shown) supported at the free end of a steel projection 40' through a compliant element 42'. The wheel 44 allows the vertical relative motion between the platform and the buoy 26, and it further reduces the friction between the two floating elements. Each wheel 44 rides on a corresponding vertical rail ~~[[46]]~~ 47 arranged on the outer surface of the buoy 26. Another advantage of the wheel/rail assembly is that it prevents rotation of the buoy 26 about its vertical axis. The wheel/rail assembly may provide a steel-to-steel contact (as friction is already reduced by the use of the wheel) or the wheel 44 and/or the rail ~~[[46]]~~ 47 may be coated with PTFE or polypropylene.